

Your First Step to Freedom From Co-Dependent Relationships

When we lose touch with our souls, we have really lost touch with our true selves. We can blame it on our busyness, our lack of time for self-reflection, or even the excesses of our culture. But in truth, we have done it to ourselves. We have given in to fear and shame, and we have settled for living through the externals of life. The result is a lowered sense of self-worth, even though we try to augment our feelings by doing all kinds of things that seem like good ideas but end up only working on the outside. It's like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, or making sure the outside of a cup is clean but not bothering to clean the inside.

We don't typically express the problem in outward ways, such as comparing ourselves to someone else and feeling that we're not as smart, attractive, or popular. It may start that way when we're young, but as we mature and become more sophisticated in our self-loathing, we're more likely to turn inward with statements such as "I'm a damaged person" or "I feel worthless." These statements pinpoint the problem as internal, as something within ourselves. It isn't that we have bad relationships; it's that we are basically bad on the inside. And because it's an internal problem, nothing we do in the external world will even touch it. Feelings of emptiness just sit there on the inside and fester.

When we try to fix internal problems through external means, it not only doesn't help, but it also leads to a place where we are truly out of sync with ourselves. Tragically, instead of changing strategies, we often just try harder to refine our false selves in hopes that we can finally get the formula right.

It's easy to see why that's an impossible task. Unless we clear out the shame we have accumulated, eliminate the bitterness and anger we have nursed and face the fear that has hindered us, nothing will change. But that's where Life Recovery begins.

Until we free our real selves from their burial place and bring them into alignment with God's design for our lives, being out of sync with ourselves will also put us out of sync in all our other relationships. One belief we must give up is the notion that we are being loving and caring when we act out our co-dependent behaviors. Co-dependent behavior is not based on or motivated by love. It is rooted in our need to feel accepted and needed. Co-dependence is a futile attempt to fill a hole inside ourselves, and it doesn't lead to close, healthy relationships.

As we regain awareness of our real selves, we need to stop saying yes to everything and stop trying to manipulate situations so we don't have to say no. We're afraid to say no because we might disappoint someone. The truth is, we can't say a healthy no if we have weak or porous boundaries or if we've built walls to shut out other people.

Healthy and safe attachments are possible only if we take responsibility for ourselves and stop blaming others. {eo}

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